



AS LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE

7701/2 Language Varieties
Report on the Examination

7701/2
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General Comments

It is clear that centres are generally preparing students well for this paper. Many responses showed a clear and wide-ranging understanding of a range of relevant linguistic theories and concepts, and students were aware of the skills they need to demonstrate on this paper. There were very few missed questions or rubric infringements. Occasionally, students mis-read the paper and answered both essay questions in section A or used the stimulus data for question 1 or 2 to produce the article required for question 3. There were also a small number of students who answered all three questions or just one overall. There were some students who adopted a paper 1 style approach, analysing the springboard data in terms of language used, limiting their overall attainment.

As ever, Section A assessed AO1 and AO2. For AO1, students were rewarded for writing a discursive essay. This is assessed in terms of accuracy of expression and ability to structure and signpost an argument. While written accuracy was generally good, there were a small minority of students who struggled to produce correctly spelled, punctuated and paragraphed work, all of which hindered their attainment in this assessment objective.

AO2 is assessed in both section A and B of the exam paper. Students are rewarded for their ability to select appropriate conceptual and theoretical knowledge and apply this to the specific question focus. For all three questions, data is provided as a 'springboard' to access the focus of the question. Students who do not move away from the data provided were unable to access the higher levels of the mark scheme as they must demonstrate understanding of ideas and theories that move beyond the information on the exam paper, but the vast majority of students demonstrate at least some understanding of key concepts and theories that they have covered over the duration of the course.

Section B also assesses AO5, with students asked to produce lively and engaging journalistic writing on a linguistic theme. Some students wrote interesting pieces of work, but failed to include any references to language study, limiting their AO2 attainment. Conversely, a small minority of students wrote an academic essay for this question, thus limiting their AO5 attainment. One of the skills assessed here is the ability to transform academic material into a form that would be suitable for a non-specialist audience. Students who recognised this and who explicitly stated their intended audience tended to be more successful.

Question 1

In this series, students were asked to 'discuss the idea that workplace jargon is a big problem.' The data provided was a shortened article from Huffpost, commenting on and offering examples of workplace jargon.

The vast majority of students were able to move beyond the article to consider wider issues relating to occupational varieties of English, often supported by an impressive range of theories and concepts. The work of Drew & Heritage, Swales, Petyt and Koester were all very popular, but students were credited for reference to a host of occupation and/or jargon related theorists and case studies. Better answers considered ideas such as communities of practice and looked at both the positives and negatives of workplace related jargon.

Some students struggled to find the balance between making a range of points and demonstrating a detailed understanding of ideas in this question. Little credit can be given for listing a series of theorists and better answers selected a smaller number of practitioners and covered their findings in more detail, linking back to the idea of distinctive varieties of English linked to occupation.

At the highest level of the mark scheme, students were able to take a more conceptual approach and discuss ideas of performativity and group identity, seeing how a range of factors intermingled to create individual linguistic identities tied to occupational groups.

More successful answers:

- Used terminology accurately and illustrated their argument with specific examples from study or their own experience
- Selected relevant theorists and showed detailed understanding of their work, linking concepts and ideas to arrive at a conclusion about how different occupational groups created a shared identity through language choices
- Built and developed an argument, rather than treating the ideas and concepts covered as existing in isolation from each other
- Moved beyond negative ideas about jargon to consider how it could be useful to create group identity, efficient communication etc

Less successful answers:

- Made vague references to language studies or miscredited findings (for example, Labov carried out extensive work into the occupational language of fishermen in New York)
- Made little attempt to develop a clear and focused line of argument
- Wrote briefly and sometimes inaccurately, with answers limited to the springboard data and with no development beyond this.

Question 2

Question 2 was the most popular question and asked students to ‘discuss the idea that accents are influenced by social factors as well as regional factors.’ The data provided looked at the use of glottal stops and phonological differences in middle class and working class boys and girls in Reading and Milton Keynes.

A range of relevant theorists were covered, with Labov’s work in New York and Martha’s Vineyard proving to be very popular. Cheshire’s work in Reading, Gary Ives in Bradford, Trudgill’s Norwich study and Rob Drummond’s study of MLE and MUBE also featured in many responses. As ever, better responses do not treat theorists and case studies in isolation, but combine the ideas to create a more holistic view of language and its role in creating social, regional and group identity.

More successful answers:

- Clearly considered a range of case studies but also combined this with conceptual awareness, considering how linguistic identity is not just linked to regional and class, but other ideas such as gender, occupation and a whole host of social factors
- Considered the ways in which a language variety such as MLE could start as a regional form and then spread through a range of social factors
- Considered how language is linked to ideas of individual performativity that goes far beyond simple ideas of geography or class.

Less successful answers:

- Listed a number of case studies with very little evidence that they had understood or internalised the work of those theorists

- Made simplistic observations about the springboard data with limited evidence that students had studied any related theories or ideas.

Question 3

Students were provided with the beginning of an article from Medium, and asked to write an article in which they discussed the gender specific language.

This question requires students to write informatively, but also to creatively adapt ideas from linguistic study into a form that would be accessible and engaging for a non-specialist audience. Students are also asked to state their chosen audience, and those who select a specific audience (an article for The Guardian or The Daily Mail tend to be the most popular) and tailor their writing accordingly tend to write more convincing pieces. A number of students still do not state their intended audience, or try to avoid the processing of complex ideas for non-specialists by stating they are writing for A-Level students. This is an unhelpful approach.

There were some commendable and creative uses of language, deploying extended metaphors to lend shape and structure to the article as a whole. Sub-editorial features such as a clear headline, strapline and other conventions of their chosen publication were often well used.

While the question initially invited students to discuss ideas related to gendered language, better answers moved beyond this to consider ideas such as deficit and dominance models, all supported with reference to the work of relevant theorists. While the findings of Jespersen, Tannen, Coates, Zimmerman & West and Gray featured prominently in answers, it was also pleasing to see some students also consider more contemporary ideas. Some students considered Butler's ideas about gender performativity in detail and there were an increasing number of responses that engaged with and challenged the notion of gender as an important factor in creating language choices. Challenges to the ideas expressed in the stimulus material, including links to sexuality and non-binary identities were often handled well and used in interesting and thought-provoking ways. Some students, however, produced very general answers that covered gender in very general terms without any reference to the idea of gendered language.

There are still a minority of students who did not use the stimulus data well in this question, basing all their examples in the article from the material provided. While the data is a way in to the focus of the article, better answers were illustrated with ideas and examples that moved well beyond the material provided. As noted in the general introduction of this report, there were also a small number of students who wrote an article that analysed the stimulus text, commenting on its graphology and use of language. These answers invariably restrict themselves to the lower levels of the mark scheme for both AO2 and AO5 as this is not an acceptable approach to this question.

More successful answers:

- Selected an appropriate audience for their piece of writing and clearly linked their point of view to the chosen publication
- Used appropriate subeditorial features
- Illustrated their points with a wide range of examples from outside the provided text
- Offered a range of challenge to the difference idea expressed in the stimulus text, discussing the changing definitions of gender and its place in the modern world
- Made clear reference to relevant linguistic concepts and theories, suitably processed for a non-specialist audience.

Less successful answers:

- Relied heavily or exclusively on the material provided
- Made confused references to case studies, suggesting that Jespersen, Tannen et al were all operating at the same time
- Wrote an essay-like response
- Struggled to maintain an appropriate tone for their stated audience
- Failed to state any audience at all and produced highly generic writing

Key advice to students from this series

For all questions, check you have understood the specific focus of the question and show in your answer that you have understood the complexity of the language issue.

Signal, signpost and develop your argument. Guide your reader through your ideas.

The data provided is there to offer some initial focus, but always move beyond this to consider wider ideas and implications. Better answers are always supported with a number of examples from wider fields of reference.

Plan in detail and leave time to proofread and correct.

Remember that this is an English Language exam and answers should be supported by detailed reference to relevant concepts, theories and case studies.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.